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13 June 2000

Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

NHTSA-00-7580-35

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DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION

Re: Elizabeth Fisher's Petition for an amendment to SEC. 571.209 Standard No. 209, Seat Belt Assemblies

Dear administrator:

I am writing in support of Elizabeth Fisher's petition to amend 49CFR571.209.

Currently, vehicle manufacturers are only required to provide seatbelts that accommodate males up to 215 pounds. This is tantamount to the federal government saying that a fat person's life doesn't matter: If you're fat and you can't buckle up and you happen to get in an automobile accident, you deserve whatever you get.

I weigh more than 215 pounds. (I guess I'm just lucky that my seatbelt does accommodate me. I'm lucky the manufacturer of my particular vehicle values my safety, even though they're not legally required to and even though the federal government does not seem to share in that valuation.) This is not just about my safety, though. My mother weighs more than 215 pounds. My father, at different times in his life, has weighed more than 215 pounds. My boyfriend weighs more than 215 pounds. The majority of my friends and relatives weigh more than 215 pounds. I would hate it if any of my loved ones—all of them honest, tax-paying, contributing members of society—happened to be riding in a vehicle with a stingy seatbelt at the wrong moment.

I personally know of three people who are unable to buckle the seatbelts in their *very own* vehicles because the belts are simply not long enough and because the vehicle manufacturer refuses to provide them with an extender for those belts. One of these people was seriously injured in an automobile accident, recently. Her injuries would have been much less severe had she been able to buckle the seatbelt of the vehicle in which she was riding. I'm sure there are tens of thousands of Americans who weigh more than 215 pounds, and they have mothers and sisters and girlfriends who care about their safety, too.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and President Clinton's Buckle Up America campaign exhort Americans to buckle up. In order for us to buckle up, vehicle manufacturers must be required to manufacture seat belt assemblies that fit all people, not just those who weigh less than 215 pounds.

I value the lives and the health of *all* Americans. I would like the NHTSA to value our lives, too!

Sincerely,

Marilyn Wann, FAT!SO? author & editor